

GLOBAL LIFE CAMPAIGN™

A Time of Contemplation, including that Jesus Christ Came For All Nations

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This is, or ought to be, a time of contemplation for all of us as our normal lives have been put on hold during this global pandemic. Yesterday I had some of the deepest and most meaningful conversations I've ever had with my 91-year old Dad, and other conversations with some of my closest friends, as I think of other family members and friends that I want to talk with during the next few days. I've also been contemplating: What does God want to speak to me that I've been too busy to hear? What does He want to speak to my nation or the nations that we have been unwilling to hear? How should I be loving members of my family and friends, as well as the difficult people in my life, better? Why don't I make more and consistent efforts to stay close to the people I love who live far from me? Would my estranged son, whom my heart longs to be with again, be willing to be restored to me? Am I willing to have some honest and difficult conversations that could result in deepening bonds of love or restoring relationships?

In this month's *Country Report* (GLC Series) – and this Resurrection week – I will focus on two other questions I've been contemplating during the past two weeks that were prompted by a comment made by a Christian leader who asserted that the Bible does not speak to nations in the New Testament. So I did a study of the Greek word "éthnos" – translated as "nations" or "peoples," and from which we get the word "ethnic" – in the New Testament, and made some amazing discoveries, including that the central focus is that Jesus Christ came for all nations.

The Bible, God's people, and nations: First, let me provide an overview. Another Christian leader and church elder emailed me a question seeking to understand these times from a Biblical perspective, and this was my reply to him: "The understanding I have of the Word of God, which is continually developing (though the Scripture does not change) and deepening, is that if we want to know about God's desire and purpose to have a people who would be His people, that story unfolds from Genesis to Revelation. Also, the story of His plan to redeem us from our sins begins in Genesis, is foreshadowed in the Old Testament, and is brought forth and understood fully only through Jesus Christ and the New Testament. But if we want to understand fixed and unchanging Laws and principles of God, how He relates to and blesses or judges nations, how He works through nature, directly or indirectly, to reveal Himself and bring His righteous judgments, including by plagues, then we must look at the Old Testament and book of Revelation. That is precisely what the founding generations (of the United States), and in part up through Abraham Lincoln, did, as is evident in their writings. The New Testament is what reveals His plan, which was always His plan, to redeem a people to Himself from every tribe, tongue, and nation, and that His people would bring the light of the Gospel, and the Truth and wisdom of the Bible, to every nation on earth."

Nations in the New Testament: The Greek word “*éthnos*” appears 163 times in 151 verses in the New Testament, most of which I find categorized as follows:

1. Any nation or people (4 times). For example: “He made from one *man* every **nation** of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined *their* appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, that they would seek God” (Acts 17:26-27).
2. Israel or the Jewish people (11): “(A)ll Jews know my manner of life from my youth up, which from the beginning was spent among my **nation** and at Jerusalem” (Acts 26:4). Also, another Greek word, *génos*, is used to refer to a race or nationality of people. “It was he [Pharaoh] who took shrewd advantage of our **race** and mistreated our fathers so that they would expose their infants and they would not survive” (Acts 7:19).
3. Gentiles, pagans, heathen, non-Jews who don’t know or worship the true God (24): “For He [Jesus] will be handed over to the **Gentiles**, and will be mocked and mistreated and spit upon, and after they have scourged Him, they will kill Him; and the third day He will rise again” (Luke 18:32-33).
4. God’s love for the people of all nations to create a new spiritual kingdom comprised of Jews and people from every nation, tribe and language (61). This was His 4,000-year plan that culminated in the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, followed by Pentecost and the birth of the Church. “Then He [Jesus] opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the **nations**, beginning from Jerusalem’” (Luke 24:45-47).
5. The Church and kingdom of God are comprised of believers in Jesus from any nation (25): “(T)he mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; *to be specific*, that the **Gentiles** are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (Ephesians 3:4-6).
6. The Final Judgment of nations, including prophets speaking to nations, and global destruction and plagues during the last 3.5 years before the return of Jesus Christ (15): “But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. All the **nations** will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’ . . . Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels;’ . . . These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” (Matthew 25:31-34, 41, 46).

7. Return of Jesus Christ and His universal reign (10): “After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every **nation** and *all* tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb [Jesus], clothed in white robes, and palm branches *were* in their hands; and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.’ And all the angels were standing around the throne and *around* the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, ‘Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, *be* to our God forever and ever. Amen” (Revelation 7:9-12).

The principle message of the New Testament regarding nations is that God’s plan was to redeem people from every tribe, tongue and nation, and create “a holy **nation**, a people of (His) own possession” (1 Peter 2:9). Because of His immeasurable love for all peoples, God sent “His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16). When Christ Jesus hung on the cross and died, He gave His life to atone for the sins of every person in the world; but His atonement is only actuated for those who humble themselves, confess their sins, and put their trust in Him. “IF we confess our sins . . .” (1 John 1:8-10). Christ’s resurrection is His victory over sin, death, Satan, and judgment, and His victory is available to people from every tribe, tongue and nation.

SDG and for the sanctity of human life,

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“AND IT SHALL BE IN THE LAST DAYS, God says, THAT I WILL POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT ON ALL MANKIND; AND YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY, AND YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS, AND YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS; EVEN ON MY BONDSLAVES, BOTH MEN AND WOMEN, I WILL IN THOSE DAYS POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT and they shall prophesy. AND I WILL GRANT WONDERS IN THE SKY ABOVE AND SIGNS ON THE EARTH BELOW, BLOOD, AND FIRE, AND VAPOR OF SMOKE. THE SUN WILL BE TURNED INTO DARKNESS AND THE MOON INTO BLOOD, BEFORE THE GREAT AND GLORIOUS DAY OF THE LORD SHALL COME. AND IT SHALL BE THAT EVERYONE WHO CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED” (Acts 2:17-21).